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Report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on recent developments in agricultural and rural statistics

Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with Economic and Social Council decision 2017/228 and past practices, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit the report of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations on recent developments in agricultural and rural statistics. It includes: (a) a report of the Global Strategy Steering Committee on the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics, which presents the key activities undertaken in 2017 and the plans for a second phase of implementation beyond 2018; (b) a summary of the work undertaken to date by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics, including the introduction of proposed guidelines for measuring food consumption and expenditures in household consumption and expenditure surveys; (c) a section on progress in the preparation of volume 2 of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020; and (d) a report on the FAO proposal for an international definition of small-scale food producers.

The Commission is invited to comment on the points for discussion raised in section VI of the report.

* E/CN.3/2018/1.

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I. Background

1. At the fortieth session of the Statistical Commission, in 2009, the Working Group on Agricultural Statistics, led by Eurostat and comprising the World Bank, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United States Department of Agriculture, reported on the main issues in agricultural statistics and proposed a framework for a strategic plan to improve national and international agricultural and rural statistics (see E/CN.3/2009/3 and Corr.1).

2. The Commission welcomed the report, supported the proposed course of action and established the Friends of the Chair on Agricultural Statistics to design a strategic plan to improve agricultural and rural statistics (see E/2009/24, chap. I, sect. B, decision 40/102). In compliance with that decision, the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics was developed in 2009 and discussed at several international and regional meetings. At its forty-first session, in 2010, the Commission endorsed the technical content and strategic direction of the Global Strategy and urged FAO and the Friends of the Chair to expedite the development of the implementation plan aimed at strengthening the national agricultural statistical system (see E/2010/24, chap. I, sect. B, decision 41/102). The action plan to implement the Global Strategy, which defined a comprehensive technical assistance, training and research programme, and its governance arrangements were presented and endorsed at the forty-third session of the Commission in 2012 (see E/2012/24, chap. I, sect. B, decision 43/104).

3. At its forty-third session, the Commission endorsed the creation of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics as a new mechanism to develop and document good practices and guidelines on concepts, methods and statistical standards for food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development. The Inter-Agency and Expert Group replaced the Friends of the Chair on Agricultural Statistics and the Wye Group on statistics on rural development and agriculture household income, with an expanded mandate to cover statistics on rural development. Additional tasks of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group are to facilitate the coordination and integration of statistics on food security, sustainable agriculture and rural development with other international statistical standards of related statistical domains, and to advise the Global Office of the Global Strategy on the research programme conducted in the framework of the Global Strategy.

4. Progress in the implementation of the Global Strategy was reported to the Commission in 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2017. The last two reports also provided an account of the progress made by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on three lines of research: (a) methods for measuring and monitoring agricultural sustainability; (b) improving rural statistics; and (c) improving food consumption measurement (see E/CN.3/2015/16, sect. III and E/CN.3/2017/27, sect. III).

5. FAO is the lead United Nations agency in charge of developing and promoting the decennial World Programme for the Census of Agriculture around the globe. Every 10 years FAO reviews countries' census experiences and lessons learned and on that basis, prepares, publishes and disseminates revised and improved census guidelines. The work undertaken by FAO, in consultation with national and international experts, to develop new guidelines for the 2020 round of the census of agriculture, which will cover the period 2016–2025, was reported to the Commission in 2015 and 2017. In particular, volume 1 of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020 was published in 2015, while a draft of volume 2 was presented to the Commission in 2017.

6. Following the adoption by the Commission of the global indicator framework to monitor the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, FAO was identified as the custodian agency of 21 Sustainable Development Goal indicators. Intensive methodological work has since been carried out by FAO to upgrade the tier classification of the indicators under its custodianship and to develop the required international definitions.

II. Report of the Global Strategy Steering Committee on the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics

A. Introduction

7. The present section provides an update on the progress made in the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics since the forty-eighth session of the Commission and the plans for a second phase of the programme beyond 2018. The report covers five topics: (a) overall progress in 2017; (b) governance, monitoring and evaluation; (c) development of cost-effective methods; (d) implementation of technical assistance and training; (e) priorities for 2018; and (f) plans for preparing a second action plan for the implementation of the Global Strategy.

B. Overall assessment of progress in 2017

8. Throughout 2017, significant efforts were made to achieve the objectives of the Global Strategy, both at global and regional levels. Furthermore, 2017 represented a pivotal year for the Global Strategy, with the finalization of core research topics, the accelerated delivery of technical assistance in target countries on a selected number of meaningful cost-effective methodologies and, finally, the decision of the Global Strategy Steering Committee to launch the preparation of a second phase of the Global Strategy.

9. The programme has improved its strategic planning approach and most of the recommendations that emerged from the mid-term evaluation (June–November 2015) were taken into consideration in planning the Global Strategy activities in 2017.

10. The Global Office made significant efforts to strengthen coordination with regional implementing partners in order to ensure greater uptake at country level of the methods, guidelines and training materials produced by the Global Office. At the same time, the delivery of cost-effective methodologies was accelerated and the documentation of six research topics was completed. By December 2017, the planned outputs for 36 research topics had been finalized, exceeding the target set by the Global Strategy logical framework. In total, 38 expert meetings had been organized, 41 research topics peer-reviewed and 28 topics field-tested since 2013. The results of the efforts made under the research component were disseminated through 25 technical reports, sets of guidelines and training materials in 2017, for a total of 70 products disseminated since 2013. In 2016, the Global Strategy Steering Committee decided to partially allocate the implementation of the newly developed accelerated technical assistance plan for Africa to the Global Office. The Global Office initiated direct provision of technical assistance on cost-effective methods to countries in Africa and has so far provided support to 14 countries. The Global Office also served

as secretariat of the task team responsible for making recommendations to the Steering Committee for the preparation of a second action plan for the Global Strategy.

11. In Africa, under the technical assistance component, the African Development Bank has provided support to 29 countries in developing strategic plans for agricultural and rural statistics and to 49 countries for improving their national coordination mechanisms. In addition, the initial activities of the accelerated technical assistance plan were started in October 2017. An updated assessment of the agricultural statistics capacity indicator, which measures African countries' capacity to produce reliable agricultural statistics, was published in October 2017. Between 2013 and 2015, the capacity indicator increased by 6.4 per cent, signalling a significant improvement of the statistical capacity of countries in the region in a relatively short period of time. With regard to the training component, the Economic Commission for Africa has provided 33 of the 40 scholarships planned for the 2017/18 academic year, organized training for trainers of regional statistical training centres and produced syllabi for selected topics.

12. In Asia and the Pacific, the FAO Regional Office made major progress in providing support to countries in preparing their strategic plans for agricultural and rural statistics: 13 countries received support in 2017. The Regional Office placed significant emphasis on providing direct technical assistance to countries on the cost-effective methodologies developed in the framework of the Global Strategy. The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific organized various training-of-trainers courses on agricultural statistics through the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific.

13. In the three regions that did not benefit from the Global Trust Fund of the Global Strategy, no significant progress was made in the mobilization of additional financial resources. Given the delayed start of the implementation of the Global Action Plan, the Global Strategy Steering Committee, in consultation with the donors, decided to extend the project for one year, until December 2018.

C. Governance, monitoring and evaluation and coordination

Governance

14. At the global level, the Global Strategy Steering Committee and the Global Executive Board held meetings in 2017. At its thirteenth meeting, held on 8 February 2017, the Steering Committee (a) approved the workplan of the Global Office for 2017; (b) allocated funds for all implementing partners; (c) endorsed a strengthened results framework; and (d) established a task team to prepare the second phase of the Global Strategy. At its fourteenth meeting, held on 12 October 2017, the Steering Committee agreed on the process for preparing the annual workplans for 2018, and endorsed the recommendations of the task team concerning the preparation of the second action plan. A further meeting of the Steering Committee was scheduled for December 2017 to endorse the allocation of funds for 2018. The Global Executive Board held its eighth meeting in February 2017 to endorse the 2017 workplans for Africa and Asia and the Pacific. The ninth meeting of the Global Executive Board was scheduled for December 2017 to endorse the 2018 workplans for Africa and Asia and the Pacific.

15. At the regional level, the Regional Steering Committee for Africa held its fifth meeting in Dakar in January 2017 and planned to hold its sixth meeting before the

end of 2017 to approve the 2018 regional workplan. The seventh meeting of the Regional Steering Committee for Asia and the Pacific was scheduled for mid-November 2017 in Bangkok, with a side meeting aimed at disseminating the cost-effective methodologies developed by the Global Office and sharing country experiences.

Coordination

16. Greater efforts have been put forth to enhance the coordination among participating partners and with other related initiatives. Meetings between implementing partners took place on a regular basis, and meetings with African partners and donors were organized every two months. The Global Office systematically attended all regional steering committee meetings.

Results framework

17. The results framework has been significantly improved in 2017 to reflect the decisions made by the Global Strategy Steering Committee to accelerate the delivery of technical assistance at country level and to implement the follow-up actions stemming from the 2015 mid-term evaluation. New activity indicators have been added, in particular for better measuring the technical assistance component. New tables have been included as annexes to the regular mid-year and annual financial reports.

Staffing

18. The Global Office has been fully staffed since the beginning of the programme in accordance with agreements made with the donors. The regional partners, however, have encountered difficulties in filling various planned positions. One partner (the African Development Bank) was not able to recruit staff for the planned project posts; other partners experienced delays in recruiting project staff (Economic Commission for Africa in 2015 and 2016; Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific in 2017). The positions of Coordinator of the Asia-Pacific regional office and Statistician have been vacant for over a year. The staffing issues have had and continue to have an impact on the delivery of activities.

Scientific Advisory Committee of the Global Strategy

19. The outputs of the research programme were discussed at the sixth meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee, held in Rome in February 2017. Eight lines of research were reviewed by the Committee: (a) methodology to include a supplementary woodfuel module in existing surveys and suggestions on data analysis; (b) statistics and indicators for the measurement of agriculture-environment interactions: a literature review and a proposal of key indicators for sustainable agriculture; (c) the measurement of productivity and efficiency in agriculture; (d) a methodological proposal and field test protocols for rural statistics; (e) a methodological proposal for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 2.4.1 on agricultural sustainability; (f) field test protocols for measuring decent work and youth employment in agriculture; (g) a technical report and guidelines on reconciling census and survey data; and (h) progress in the methodological development of the Agricultural Integrated Survey (AGRIS) and report from the expert meeting. The Committee welcomed the progress made on these eight lines of research and provided guidance and comments on the next steps. Furthermore, it recommended that all

Global Office outputs be readily available for implementation and that country-level adoption be tracked to monitor results.

D. Development of cost-effective methods

20. Since the beginning of the implementation of the Global Strategy in 2013, efforts have been made by the Global Office to carry out a comprehensive research programme and prepare guidelines and training material that could be used for supporting the provision of technical assistance to countries and regional statistical training institutions. By end of 2017, most of the research lines, including the development of the AGRIS toolkit, had been completed and more than 70 technical reports and sets of guidelines disseminated through the Global Strategy website (www.gsars.org). Over 9,000 pages of technical reports and guidelines, as well as 3,000 pages of training material and two e-learning courses, have been published in the resource centre of the Global Strategy website.

Research agenda

21. A detailed description of the progress made in 2017 under the different topics of the research agenda is provided below:

(a) Master sampling frame: experiments in Nepal were completed while pilots are being finalized in Rwanda and Brazil; a technical report illustrating the main findings will be issued in the first quarter of 2018; and specific guidelines dedicated to fisheries are expected to be published in the first half of 2018;

(b) Forestry: research on the collection of national forest products statistics was completed; the methodological work for incorporating a woodfuel module into existing surveys is still ongoing, with field tests being implemented in Ecuador and Lesotho; and guidelines are expected to be published in the first half of 2018;

(c) Post-harvest losses: field tests have been completed in Ghana, as well as a desk study in Malawi, and guidelines are to be issued in early 2018;

(d) Farm typology: research on this topic has progressed well and an expert meeting is being organized to complete the guidelines by mid-2018;

(e) Assessing user needs for decision making: the guidelines will be finalized in early 2018;

(f) Measuring decent work and youth employment: field tests for this research line were carried out in Kenya and guidelines are to be published by mid-2018;

(g) Indicators and collection methods on agri-environment: an expert group meeting was organized and guidelines will be published by mid-2018;

(h) Measuring agricultural productivity and efficiency: the literature review was published, an expert meeting was organized and guidelines are expected for mid-2018;

(i) Framework, methods for measuring and monitoring agricultural sustainability: the Global Office has closely collaborated with FAO in developing an internationally agreed methodology for Sustainable Development Goal indicator 2.4.1 and in testing its feasibility in five countries, through an analysis of available data. An online global consultation on the methodology of indicator 2.4.1 has also been initiated;

(j) Rural statistics: significant progress has been made on the definition of rural areas and on the identification of core rural indicators; the work on the first task is being undertaken in partnership with the Voluntary Commitment Group (Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, World Bank and OECD), with the objective of developing harmonized guidelines for the definition of rural and urban areas in 2018; and tests are being conducted in close collaboration with the Joint Research Centre;

(k) AGRIS: the methodological toolkit was finalized and disseminated, and the final test in Ghana of the integrated questionnaire will be completed by February 2018.

Guidelines and training material

22. From its inception, the Global Office has produced nearly 70 products on cost-effective methodologies for agricultural statistics. All products have been disseminated on the Global Strategy website (www.gsars.org). Particularly important are the following materials developed in 2017: a handbook on the use of remote sensing for agricultural statistics, guidelines on the use of administrative data, guidelines on livestock and livestock products, guidelines on food balance sheets, guidelines on gender, updated guidelines on strategic plans for agricultural and rural statistics and the AGRIS toolkit. Moreover, a 10-day modular comprehensive training course on agricultural statistics was produced in 2017, while at the same time specialized training materials have been developed on cost of production, computer-assisted personal interviewing, nomadic livestock, master sampling frame, food balance sheets, fishery statistics, post-harvest losses and livestock products. In Africa, the Economic Commission for Africa has produced syllabi, curricula and 10 training materials which are being validated in regional expert group meetings. In Asia and the Pacific, the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific has produced 15 syllabi, curricula and training materials.

E. Implementation of technical assistance and training components

Technical assistance in Africa

23. In July 2017, the African Development Bank published the results of a second round of assessments of national agricultural statistical systems across the Africa region. The assessments highlight significant improvements in the capacities of countries to produce reliable and timely agricultural statistics. Moreover, all data collected in 2016 through the workshops on the minimum set of core data were published in 2017 under the Bank's Africa Information Highway. Support to the strategic plans for agricultural and rural statistics process was ongoing in 2017, and by end of 2018, 29 countries in Africa are expected to have a strategic plan in place. In a joint effort of the African Development Bank and the Global Office, activities carried out under the accelerated technical assistance plan have yielded significant results: in 2017, 14 countries were assisted by the Global Office in the following areas: computer-assisted personal interviewing, cost of production, master sampling frame and AGRIS, food balance sheets, post-harvest losses and livestock and nomadic livestock.

Technical assistance in Asia and the Pacific

24. The FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific has provided support to 13 target countries for the development of strategic plans for agricultural and rural

statistics. Significant support was delivered to 10 countries on the use of cost-effective methodologies for crop monitoring, livestock measurement, use of administrative data, computer-assisted personal interviewing, cost of production, master sampling frame and food balance sheets. Close synergies were pursued with other ongoing projects and regular programme activities of FAO to boost the impact of the Global Strategy at regional level; for example, the activities identified in strategic plans have been funded through complementary FAO projects in a few countries. A key output that addresses the specific needs of the Pacific subregion, the Pacific strategic action plan for agriculture and fisheries statistics, was jointly prepared by FAO and the Pacific Community, with the support of the Global Strategy.

Training in Africa

25. Since the beginning of the project, the Economic Commission for Africa has granted 72 scholarships and organized 23 workshops. Training on the use of cost-effective methods has also been provided to almost all African countries. In 2017, emphasis was placed on the preparation of syllabi and the provision of training for trainers, in close collaboration with the network of regional statistical training institutions.

Training in Asia and the Pacific

26. The Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific has organized 20 national training workshops for 20 target countries since the beginning of the project. In 2017, six workshops were held on the following topics: computer-assisted personal interviewing, agricultural cost of production and food balance sheets.

F. Way forward and priorities for 2018

27. The activities planned by the Global Office for the final year of implementation of the programme will focus on: (a) finalizing the research work on priority topics, in particular those related to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development; (b) producing the guidelines and training materials related to the lines of research completed in 2017 and those to be finalized in 2018; (c) completing the activities initiated in 2017 in the framework of the accelerated plan on technical assistance in Africa; (d) jointly organizing with the FAO Office of Evaluation the final evaluation of the first phase of the Global Strategy; (e) organizing the final conference for discussing the main achievements of the first phase and preparing the second phase; (f) serving as secretariat of the new Task Team in charge of drafting the second action plan for the Global Strategy; (g) organizing, as secretariat of the Global Strategy Steering Committee, a Steering Committee meeting in mid-2018 to review the ongoing implementation and take decisions regarding the necessary actions to guarantee that the final activities will be implemented smoothly by all partners; (h) organizing the preparation of the final narrative and financial consolidated reports for mid-2019; and (i) ensuring that all the material developed in the framework of the Global Strategy is made available through an appropriate repository.

28. In Africa, the activities planned for 2018 by the African Development Bank will focus on: (a) providing technical assistance to countries in the framework of the accelerated technical assistance plans endorsed by the Global Strategy Steering Committee; (b) supporting the design of strategic plans for agricultural and rural statistics in countries that have started the process; (c) undertaking another country assessment cycle to measure the impact of the implementation of the Global Strategy

at country level; and (d) improving the dissemination of results achieved. The activities planned by the Economic Commission for Africa will focus on: (a) providing scholarships; (b) finalizing the syllabi on cost-effective methods; and (c) delivering training for trainers in collaboration with the network of regional statistical training institutions. The joint activities planned by the two partners will be the following: contributing to the final reporting on activities carried out in coordination with the Global Office; preparation of a final conference planned for end of 2018; the final evaluation; and the contributing to the work of the task team responsible for preparing the second action plan for the Global Strategy.

29. In Asia and the Pacific, the FAO Regional Office will focus in 2018 on: (a) providing support to countries in the framework of the accelerated technical assistance plans endorsed by the Global Strategy Steering Committee; (b) supporting the design of strategic plans for agricultural and rural statistics in countries that have started the process; and (c) undertaking another country assessment cycle to measure the impact of the implementation of the Global Strategy at country level. The activities planned for the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific will focus on: (a) finalizing syllabi on cost-effective methods; and (b) providing training for trainers in collaboration with the Network for the Coordination of Statistical Training in Asia and the Pacific. The joint activities planned by the two partners will mainly include contributing to the overall final reporting in coordination with the Global Office, preparing a final conference scheduled for the end of 2018, the final evaluation and contributing to the task team responsible for preparing the second action plan for the Global Strategy.

G. Preparation of a second action plan beyond 2018

30. At its thirteenth meeting, the Global Strategy Steering Committee endorsed the establishment of the task team to prepare the second phase of the Global Strategy and its proposed terms of reference, with the Global Office as secretariat. The task team reported back to the Steering Committee on 12 October 2017 with proposals and recommendations concerning the objectives, main outputs and implementation modalities of the second phase of implementation of the Global Strategy (2018–2022). The second phase is expected to focus on supporting countries' capacity to respond more effectively and sustainably to the data requirements of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the area of agricultural and rural statistics.

31. The task team meetings, held on 13 September and 3 October 2017, were chaired by Johannes Jütting, Manager of the Partnership in Statistics for Development in the 21st Century. With the support of the secretariat, the task team analysed relevant documents and summarized the lessons learned from the implementation of phase one. The task team used the strength, weakness, opportunity and threat analysis to develop a matrix of possible strategic axes for the second phase. This was used as the basis to provide five recommendations to the Global Strategy Steering Committee.

32. The Steering Committee, at its fourteenth meeting, endorsed the following five recommendations:

(a) The preparation of an implementation plan for the second phase of the Global Strategy is recommended, with the following objectives: (i) strengthen countries' capacities using innovative approaches and boost data production through technical assistance and training in order to respond to the emerging data needs for the evolving national, regional and international development agendas, particularly related to the measurement and monitoring of Sustainable Development Goal

indicators; and (ii) increase the link between the production and use of agricultural statistics and national strategies for the development of statistics and strategic plans for agricultural and rural statistics to avoid the creation of sectorial silos and modernize data and statistical production on the basis of the principles formulated in the Cape Town Global Action Plan for Sustainable Development Data;

(b) The second phase of the implementation plan should build on the strengths and results achieved during phase one, taking into account new opportunities, drawing lessons from the challenges faced and minimizing the possible threats. It should be focused on providing technical assistance and training in cost-effective methods to countries, using a modular approach and promoting innovative and efficient delivery modalities that reflect the latest advancements in capacity development. It should also take other existing initiatives into consideration in order to avoid duplications;

(c) A specific component of phase two should focus on advocacy and dissemination of cost-effective methodologies at country level as well as on sharing countries' experiences in their implementation;

(d) A simplification of the existing governance structures is recommended and innovative coordination and implementation mechanisms should be established to facilitate efficient delivery;

(e) A revised and innovative funding strategy, consistent with a flexible and modular implementation approach, should be adopted for phase two.

33. Finally, the Global Strategy Steering Committee approved the proposed modalities for the preparation of a second action plan for the Global Strategy:

(a) A new task team will be established to prepare the second phase, relying on and expanding the membership of the current task team, as needed. A drafting team will need to be established within the task team to prepare the second action plan in an inclusive manner. The secretariat is to prepare the terms of references, a workplan and a budget for the new task team, including for the drafting team, to be approved by the Global Strategy Steering Committee;

(b) The Global Office should include in its annual workplan for 2018 the budgetary provision to cover the activities in 2018 of the new task team.

III. Activities of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics

34. At the most recent meeting of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics, held in March 2017, three reports were discussed: (a) a report prepared by FAO on the definition of smallholders to monitor Sustainable Development Goal target 2.3; (b) a report by the Global Office on the progress of research on rural statistics; and (c) a report by the World Bank on the progress made in the elaboration of guidelines on food consumption measurement.

35. The guidelines for the collection of food consumption data were finalized by the World Bank and FAO in 2017. On the basis of a broad consensus, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group recommended that the document on food consumption measurement be submitted for endorsement at the forty-ninth session of the Statistical Commission. The guidelines are available as a background document.

Guidelines for the collection of food data in household consumption and expenditure surveys

36. Food is a key component of a number of fundamental welfare dimensions, such as food security, nutrition, health and prosperity. It makes up the largest share of household expenditure in low-income countries, accounting on average for about 50 per cent of the household budget, and thus constitutes a sizeable share of the economy. Proper measurement of food consumption is therefore central to the assessment and monitoring of various dimensions of well-being of any population, and hence of interest to multiple international, national and local agencies and to several development domains, including the social, economic and human domains.

37. Food consumption data are needed to monitor global targets, including key target indicators under the Sustainable Development Goals framework. The measurement of food consumption is crucial to assessing and guiding the pursuit of the FAO mandate to eradicate hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition and the World Bank's twin goals of eliminating extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity. It is also important for national accounting measures of the overall size of the economy, such as gross domestic product. Finally, it is of interest to national and local governments, as well as non-governmental organizations, in guiding local and regional analysis and policy, as the mismeasurement of food consumption can lead to misallocation of funds and compromise the design, monitoring and evaluation of relevant policies and programmes.

38. Household consumption and expenditure surveys are the main instrument used to collect information on food consumption for these purposes. However, current practices for collecting consumption data differ widely across types of surveys, between countries and over time, compromising both the quality and comparability of the resulting data and measures. In the interest of improving food consumption measures, and to ensure that the data collected respond to the needs of a wide range of users, the Inter-Agency and Expert Group has led an effort to develop survey design guidelines based on a review of existing evidence and the commissioning of new, purposely designed research. The result of this effort is a set of recommendations for the design of food consumption modules in household consumption and expenditure surveys that are based on the contributions of a large community of experts, national statistical offices and international organizations.

39. The process that led to the current version of the guidelines document involved two expert consultations organized at FAO headquarters in 2014 and 2016, which included the participation of experts from different disciplines (economics, nutrition, food security, statistics) and institutional backgrounds (national statistical offices, international organizations, research institutes, academia). The analytical activities overseen by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group resulted in the preparation of a volume presenting new research from leading experts in the field, which was published in September 2017 in a special issue of the peer-reviewed journal *Food Policy*. The workplan for the preparation of the guidelines was first presented at a side event organized at the forty-sixth session of the Statistical Commission, in March 2015. In 2016, the management group of the Intersecretariat Working Group on Household Surveys selected the harmonization of food consumption modules used in household surveys as one of the priority tasks for that group to work on, and mandated the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics to act as a task force for implementing a work programme to pursue that objective. A first draft of the guidelines was discussed by the members of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group

and presented at an open seminar during the forty-eighth session of the Statistical Commission in March 2017. The results of those discussions are reflected in the final version of the guidelines.

40. The work on the guidelines was led by the World Bank and FAO, with support from the Global Office of the Global Strategy for the Improvement of Agricultural and Rural Statistics. Countries that participated in an official capacity in the process included Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Indonesia, Mongolia, Morocco, Peru, Sweden, United States and the United States of America. Besides the members of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group, experts from the Asian Development Bank, the International Food Policy Research Institute, the Italian Institute of Statistics, the Bank of Italy, the Food and Nutrition Research Institute of the Philippines, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission, as well as experts from universities and research institutes in Brazil, Greece, India, New Zealand, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America, all contributed to the development and review of the document.

41. The guidelines aim at assisting practitioners in improving survey design, while taking into account the cost of organizing a survey and the constraints statistical offices in low- and middle-income countries face. The domains covered by the recommendations in the guidelines include the most important survey design choices: the choice between a recall and a diary approach; the length of reference period; issues to do with capturing seasonality; number of survey visits; the collection of acquisition or consumption data; accounting for the number of members of the household participating in the meals consumed; accounting for food eaten away from home; principles for drawing the list of food items; and overcoming issues concerning the conversion of non-standard units of measurement.

42. The document presents an extensive discussion of the existing and emerging theoretical and empirical arguments in favour of or against each survey design choice. The discussion is based on a thorough review of the literature and on pilot studies conducted for the express purpose of contributing to the guidelines. The document also highlights areas where research is scant and more methodological work is needed to fully appreciate the impact of alternative survey designs. The overarching concern in drawing the recommendations has been to ensure the most appropriate balance between accuracy and cost-effectiveness, bearing in mind the typical constraints faced by low- and middle-income countries' statistical offices. In some cases, the recommendations might entail a costlier option than what is currently practiced, while in some cases their implementation might reduce the cost of data collection. The benefits should be assessed not only in terms of the accuracy and comparability of the data being collected, but also in terms of their usefulness and relevance of data for a wider user base (e.g., nutritionists and food security analysts, as well as statisticians and economists).

IV. World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020

43. Following the publication of volume 1 of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020, "Programme, concepts and definitions", in all official languages of the United Nations, round-table meetings were organized in 2016 and 2017 to present and disseminate the volume to FAO member countries in eight regions of the world: the Near East, Francophone Africa, Asia and Latin America in 2016, and Central and Eastern Europe, the Caribbean, Anglophone Africa and the Pacific in

2017. The participants were official statisticians and census leaders (from the ministry of agriculture and the national statistics office of each country) who will play a key role in the planning and execution of the next agricultural census in their countries.

44. Parallel to this work, FAO started the preparation of volume 2 of the World Programme, "Operational guidelines". Volume 2 is a revised and updated edition of the document entitled "Conducting agricultural censuses and surveys", published by FAO in 1996. It complements volume 1 by providing practical guidance to census practitioners on the main stages involved in the preparation and implementation of the census of agriculture following the new approaches introduced in volume 1.

45. Volume 2 also provides guidance for implementing the substantial innovations in census technology that have occurred over the last two decades. The availability of digital, mobile and more affordable tools for data capture, as well as for geo-positioning, remote sensing imaging, digital archiving and dissemination have provided new cost-effective alternatives to traditional methods of conducting the agricultural census. This technological revolution facilitates field operations and monitoring, shortens data processing, streamlines data archiving and preservation, increases the timeliness of the census data and ensures user-friendly access to and comprehensibility of the census results. The guidelines link to additional material of use to countries, such as publications and web-based resources that provide further illustration or additional details on addressing practical issues. Lessons learned from countries that have implemented new methodologies are shared through case studies of country practices.

46. Volume 2 has undergone an extensive consultation process. A technical review meeting was organized in January 2017 with the participation of global, regional and country experts to discuss the draft. Subsequently, Statistics Canada undertook a peer-review of the new draft between June and September 2017, which helped to improve the text. Thanks to that valuable contribution, a final draft of volume 2 was prepared and submitted to member countries and relevant international organizations in October 2017 for global consultation. A summary of the comments received will be submitted as a background document to the Commission.

47. Furthermore, FAO continues to assist member countries in strengthening their capacity to plan and implement the tenth round of the census of agriculture (2016–2025).

V. Proposal for an international definition of small-scale food producers

48. Following the adoption by the Statistical Commission of the global indicator framework to monitor the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, FAO was identified as the custodian agency of 21 indicators, with the responsibility of collecting, validating and harmonizing data to track progress and inform annual reports at subregional, regional and global levels.

49. Two of the indicators under FAO custodianship, indicators 2.3.1 and 2.3.2, are designed to monitor progress in doubling the agricultural productivity and incomes of small-scale food producers.

50. Though not strictly necessary to monitor trends in the labour productivity and income of small-scale food producers at national level, an international agreed definition is necessary to produce internationally comparable data for Sustainable

Development Goal indicators 2.3.1 and 2.3.2. Such a definition is also needed to compare the structure of the agricultural sector across countries and identify specific policy measures to address the challenges faced by small-scale food producers around the world.

51. Reaching consensus on an international definition of "small-scale food producers" is rather challenging, since the agroecological and socioeconomic conditions of food producers vary greatly across countries, as do the definitions proposed in the literature and adopted for national policy purposes. It is important to highlight, however, that the international definition of small-scale food producers proposed by FAO is meant to ensure consistent global reporting on the Sustainable Development Goal indicators and not to replace national definitions that reflect national policy priorities. Therefore, if the definition is endorsed, countries will be requested to collect data that can be considered in terms of both the national and international definitions.

52. Before entering into a discussion of the criteria used for defining food producers, some clarifications concerning the target population are required. Only operators belonging to the broader agricultural sector are considered food producers (farmers, fishers, foresters, and pastoralists), while agro-industry operators are outside the scope. In addition, hobby leisure farmers (a growing phenomenon in many developed countries) are not comprised in the target population. These categories, however, are better excluded at national level because setting a unique threshold at international level risks also excluding subsistence farmers in developing countries, who instead should be included.

53. FAO proposes defining small-scale food producers using a combination of two criteria, namely the physical size of the producer's operation, as expressed by the amount of land and the number of head of livestock in production, and the economic size of the operation, as expressed by its revenues. The use of revenue as an additional criterion reduces the risk of classifying as small-scale food producers those who manage to generate relatively large revenues, even from a small resource base. These criteria are applied not in absolute but in relative terms, in order to accommodate national specificities. From the operational viewpoint, following this approach, small-scale food producers are identified by the intersection of three distinct groups.

54. The first group is those who operate an amount of land falling in the first two quintiles (the bottom 40 per cent) of the cumulative distribution of land size (measured in hectares) at national level.

55. The second group is those who operate a number of livestock falling in the first two quintiles of the cumulative distribution of the number of livestock per production unit at national level (measured in Tropical Livestock Units).

56. The third group is those who obtain an annual economic revenue from agricultural activities falling in the first two quintiles of the cumulative distribution of economic revenues from agricultural activities (measured in purchasing power parity dollars) at national level. This proposal is described in a technical note which has been submitted as background document to the current session of the Commission.

57. The definition was developed after an extensive literature review and the collection of national definitions. The proposed definition was then tested on a sample of 29 countries, using micro-data of 41 integrated agricultural surveys available to FAO and carrying out simulations on the impact of using different definitional criteria. The exercise is being extended to include some additional simulations for

European countries and the United States, carried out in collaboration with the national statistical institutions of those countries.

58. A wide consultation process, involving experts from international organizations and national statistical offices, was undertaken to review and finalize the proposed definition. The proposal, in particular, was validated by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics, which comprises representatives of United Nations agencies and official statisticians from Brazil, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Morocco, Peru, Samoa, Sweden, the United Republic of Tanzania, the United States and Eurostat. Subsequently, in August 2017, FAO and the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, in coordination with the co-chairs of the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Sustainable Development Goal Indicators, launched a global written consultation involving all United Nations member countries. The consultation was open for a total of six weeks and feedback was received from 58 national and regional institutions. Detailed results of the consultation and replies to the main comments provided are reported in the background document.

59. During the global consultation, some concerns were expressed regarding the choice of the threshold for the distributions of the definitional variables. In particular, some countries considered the threshold selected as arbitrary, requesting it to be either higher or lower. It should be noted, however, that all thresholds are somewhat arbitrary, and focusing on the bottom 40 per cent is common among programmes tackling inequalities (for example, the shared prosperity project of the World Bank).

60. Some suggestions were made to include additional criteria, such as the agroecological zone, the farming system or the degree of mechanization of the farm. These factors, however, are not always meaningful for all types of food producers. Moreover, it should be considered that the economic size criterion already captures these variables, at least partially, through their impact on the revenue of the food producer. The use of these variables, therefore, does not seem to increase significantly the precision of the definition, while it makes measurement much more difficult.

61. Some comments highlighted the difficulty of implementing the proposed definition, which requires complex data (in particular on the revenues of food producers) not readily available in all countries. This is certainly an important aspect which, however, needs to be addressed anyway, given that countries are required to collect the same type of information for monitoring Sustainable Development Goal indicator 2.3.2. The necessary source for assessing both indicators is an integrated agricultural and household survey, which is already conducted in a number of countries. FAO has recently developed AGRIS and the related toolkit to provide guidance to countries on how to upgrade their national agricultural survey for monitoring the Sustainable Development Goals.

62. Although highlighting some reasonable concerns, none of the comments received has offered concrete and viable proposals for an alternative approach, nor did any significant consensus emerge around a way to amend the proposed definition. In order to address the concerns raised, FAO is reaching out to the few countries who have turned down the definition to find an agreement.

VI. Points for discussion

63. The Statistical Commission is invited to:

(a) Express its views on the progress and latest developments in the implementation of the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics;

(b) Express its support for the preparation of a second action plan for the Global Strategy to Improve Agricultural and Rural Statistics;

(c) Comment and provide further guidance on work being carried out by the Inter-Agency and Expert Group on Agricultural and Rural Statistics;

(d) Endorse the proposed guidelines for the collection of food data in household consumption and expenditure surveys;

(e) Take note of the final draft of volume 2 of the World Programme for the Census of Agriculture 2020 and encourage member countries to use it as a reference for the implementation of the 2020 round of the census of agriculture;

(f) Urge member countries to conduct at least one census of agriculture in the period 2016–2025;

(g) Request countries, resource partners and other donors to mobilize resources for the implementation of the 2020 round of the census of agriculture;

(h) Review the proposed international definition of small-scale food producers to be considered for endorsement by the Commission.